

INFORMATION

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September 28, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: John H. Holdridge

SUBJECT: COSVN Directive on Communist Political and Diplomatic Offensive

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[REDACTED] COSVN Directive of August 28 dealing with Madame Binh's recent eight point proposal in Paris.

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[REDACTED] the directive orders that the entire Communist apparatus in South Vietnam be mobilized in support of a political offensive. It orders the Communists to win over South Vietnamese "middle classes, religious groups, intelligentsia, and the bourgeoisie" by convincing them that only the ouster of the present regime in Saigon and a U.S. troop withdrawal stand in the way of an end to the war. In this way, COSVN declares, the Communists will pave the way for the formation of a "third force" -- presumably non-Communist -- that is apt to come to terms with them.

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As a starter, Madame Binh's speech is to be distributed to all Vietnamese groups and individuals of consequence as well as to Saigon newspapers. Communist agents and sympathizers are to promote protest meetings and demonstrations; South Vietnamese soldiers are to be urged through their families to desert.

Although the political front is emphasized, Communist military forces are directed to mount coordinated attacks, particularly on U.S. troops, on "every battleground." The directive warns the

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rank and file not to expect total victory from a diplomatic offensive alone, but also not to underestimate the power of a political offensive or to fail to coordinate other activity with it.

The directive also suggests that the Communist call for a total U.S. withdrawal contains a good deal of flexibility. In relation to U.S. withdrawals, the directive states that "if only part of the U.S. troops are withdrawn... from South Vietnam by June 1971... those remaining must stay within defined areas."

Comment. The document generally seems quite credible. As we noted in a previous memorandum on this subject, the number of recently [redacted] captured documents dealing with Madame Binh's speech certainly indicate the beginning of a significant Communist political offensive in South Vietnam and the existence of just such a high level directive [redacted]

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We are less certain about the accuracy [redacted] regarding a U.S. withdrawal, but it is nevertheless an interesting twist. It is quite plausible, of course, that the Communists are privately more flexible on this issue than Madame Binh's recent public proposal. Rather than agreeing to extend the withdrawal deadline an additional number of months, however, the directive indicates that the Communists might offer a cease fire vis a vis U.S. forces in return for a U.S. regroupment in South Vietnam by the end of next June, which underscores the importance to them of achieving some progress on the withdrawal issue by that date. This in turn suggests that -- should their political efforts fail to dislodge Thieu by that time -- they might try to play a strong hand in the South Vietnamese presidential elections early next fall, hoping to use some type of withdrawal agreement with the U.S. as psychological ammunition.

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The effort which the Communists evidently intend to put into this political offensive indicates that it will be a major part of their total strategy.

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